

## PART VI

## Livestock, Dairying and Poultry

General Importance

Livestock and poultry raising and dairying are the most important farming activities in San Juan County. There were 67 general livestock farms, 30 dairy farms and 10 poultry farms specializing in the animal industries in 1954. Over 85 percent of all gross farm income in the county is derived from sales of livestock or poultry or animal products such as milk, cream, eggs and wool. Live cattle and calves are the leading single type of farm commodity sold. Eggs are second in importance and sheep, lambs and wool are third. The value of all livestock and livestock products sold in 1954 was about \$547,800. Nearly all the islands are used for some form of livestock raising but San Juan and Lopez Islands contain most of the county's cattle, sheep, hogs and poultry.

Livestock and Poultry Trends

The general trend for all livestock and poultry has been one of expanding value and larger gross returns from sales. The inventory value of all

Total Value of San Juan County Livestock: \$948,125

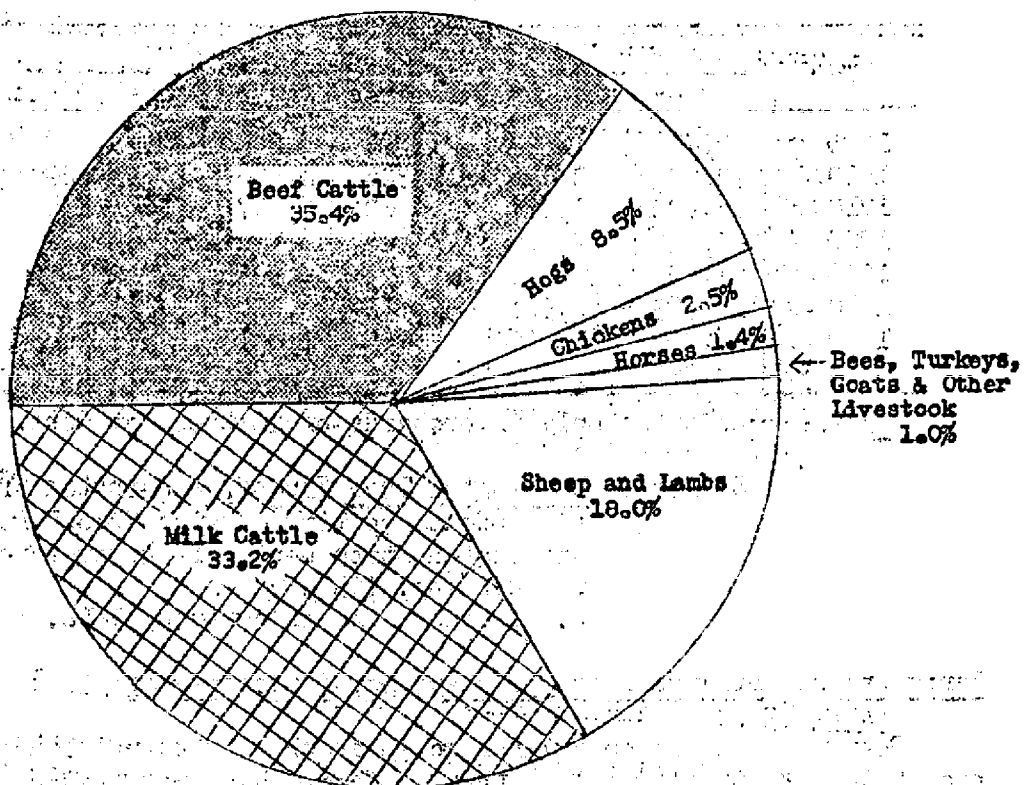


Figure 10.- Value of Livestock on Farms  
San Juan County, 1954  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

livestock and poultry kept on farms has gone up nearly 40 percent since 1950. Total value of all livestock reached \$948,000 in 1954 compared with \$675,000 in 1949. Most of the gain has been in beef cattle which have gone up from 400 to 1,900 head. Since 1939 there has been an increase in value of dairy production but a decline in numbers of dairy cattle. Compared with 1939, there have been declines in numbers of chickens, turkeys and horses and gains in sheep and hogs kept on farms.

#### Cattle: Beef and Dairy Farming

Beef and dairy cattle are major sources of farm income in San Juan County and make up a major part of the assessed value of farm property. Cattle are raised on nearly three-fourths of all the farms and cattle of all types account for about two-thirds of the total value of all livestock. Beef and dairy herds are generally small averaging less than 20 head per farm. San Juan Island has the largest cattle population, approximating 2,000 head. Lopez Island, together with Decatur, Shaw and Blakely Islands, has approximately 1,800 head. Orcas and the northern district islands have about 1,100 head.

Beginning in the World War II years when demands for beef were heavy, there was considerable change-over from dairying to beef farming. Lack of labor for dairying and smaller requirements for labor in beef raising was a factor in the change. Beef cattle were increased from a low of 200 head in 1939 to a peak of 2,100 head in 1955. Dairy breeds of cattle and calves declined from 3,400 head in 1939 to a low of 2,100 head in 1957.

Table 20.- Cattle on Farms  
San Juan County, 1939-1958

Year	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	3,600	200	3,400
1940	3,700	300	3,400
1941	4,000	600	3,400
1942	4,300	700	3,600
1943	4,600	1,100	3,500
1944	4,300	900	3,400
1945	3,900	800	3,100
1946	3,400	300	3,100
1947	3,400	300	3,100
1948	3,400	200	3,200
1949	3,500	400	3,100
1950	3,700	400	3,300
1951	4,000	600	3,400
1952	3,900	800	3,100
1953	5,000	1,700	3,300
1954	4,900	1,900	3,000
1955	4,100	2,100	2,000
1956	3,900	1,900	2,000
1957	3,800	1,700	2,100
1958	3,700	1,400	2,300

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Divn.  
State of Washington

Dairy farmers, while decreasing milk cow numbers, have increased milk production. Dairymen changed over to more fluid milk sales starting in the War years and by 1954 returns for whole milk were greater than from cream. Many dairymen have abandoned home separation of fluid milk and farm churning of butter. The volume of whole milk sold reached a peak of 950,720 pounds during 1954. About 20 major dairy farms specialized in fluid milk while about 60 farms sold cream in 1954.

Table 21.- Dairy Products Sold From Farms  
San Juan County, 1939-1954

Year	Whole Milk Sold From Farms		Cream Sold From Farms		Butter Sold From Farms	
	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)
1939	382,710	11,480	282,510	141,255	1,528	450
1944	490,270	19,610	244,920	146,950	NA	NA
1949	815,769	36,160	169,916	107,120	NA	NA
1954	950,720	39,540	62,125	33,305	NA	NA

NA - not available.

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

### Poultry Farming

Poultry and eggs are second to cattle raising in San Juan County. About one-fourth of all farms kept poultry in 1954 and sold eggs, broilers or live poultry. Poultry farming is generally distributed over the larger islands and most operations are medium-sized averaging about 150 chickens per farm flock. There were about 60 egg-laying flocks in the islands in 1954 producing eggs for sales totaling \$93,800. Raising broilers was a specialty on 5 farms and total production in 1954 was 67,000 commercial birds, valued at \$54,600. The poultry industry, with the exception of turkeys, has been relatively stable since 1939, with egg production ranging from 190,000 to 267,000 dozen per year. The broiler industry expanded in the 1950's. Turkey raising dropped drastically from 9,000 birds in 1939 to less than 300 in 1954.

Table 22.- Chickens, Egg Production, Turkeys  
San Juan County, 1939-1954

Year	Chickens	Egg Production	Turkeys Raised
	(birds)	(dozens)	(birds)
1939	26,861	266,787	9,005
1944	24,470	194,360	7,306
1949	20,123	191,275 <sup>1/</sup>	752
1954	24,285	232,590 <sup>1/</sup>	283

<sup>1/</sup> Eggs sold by farmers; does not include eggs consumed on farms.

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold  
in 1954 - \$157,940

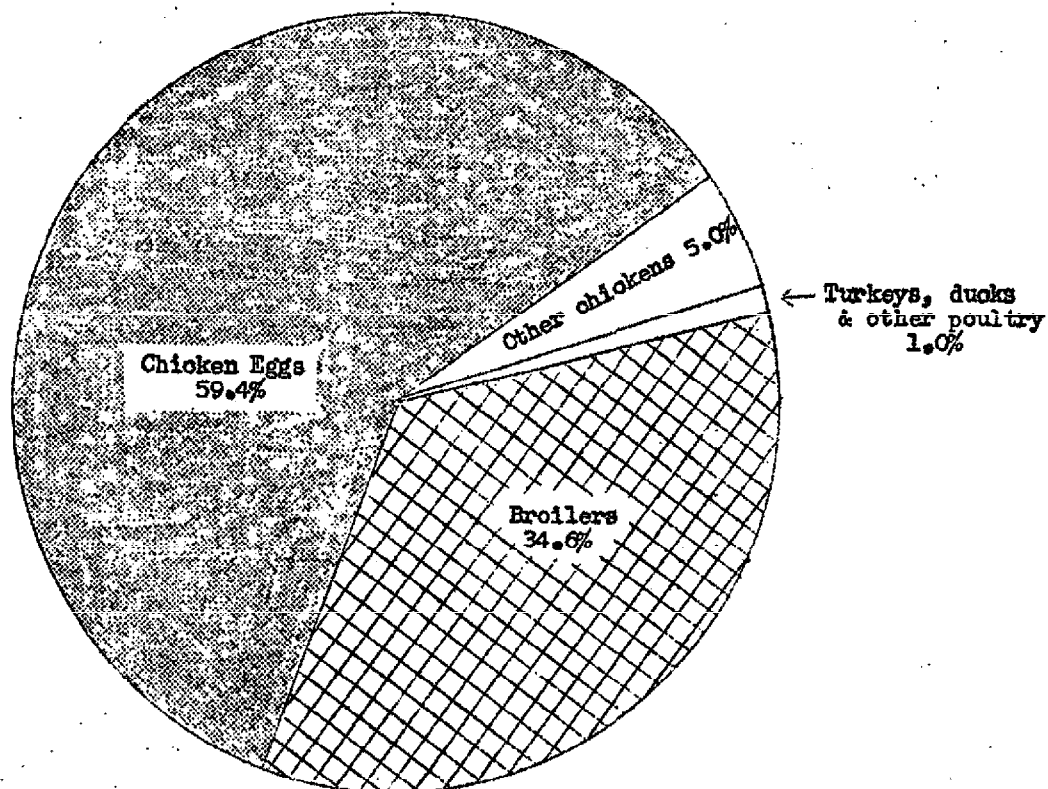


Figure 11.- Divisions of San Juan County Poultry Industry  
By Products Sold in 1954  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

### Sheep

Sheep raising has been a popular type of livestock farming for 100 years in the San Juan Islands. Since the introduction of sheep by Hudson's Bay Company in 1859 this industry has spread to most of the islands. The county is one of the state's leaders in sheep. A moderate climate without excessive rainfall, lack of predatory animals and generally good conditions for pasture growth have made sheep raising successful on both the small and large islands. In recent years there has been a slight decline in numbers, dropping from 11,742 head in 1949 to 8,620 in 1954. Since 1920 the sheep population in the islands has ranged from 7,400 to nearly 12,000 head. Sheep are in small flocks averaging about 80 to 90 head per farm. The annual lamb crop exceeds 2,400 head. Over 100 or about one-third of all San Juan County farms keep sheep for commercial lamb and wool production. Sheep are generally distributed over the islands, but are concentrated on San Juan Island where over 4,000 head are kept on about 40 farms. There are about 2,000 head on Lopez Island and 1,000 on Orcas Island. The smaller islands such as Waldron, Shaw, Decatur, Blakely, Sucia, Henry and Stuart have a total of about 600 head.

### Hogs

Hogs have declined from 1,800 head in 1945 to about 1,000 in 1954. About 80 farms kept hogs in 1954 and 50 of these sold them commercially. Hogs have

long been a sideline on dairy farms where they are fed skimmed milk from cream separators and also given rations of locally raised barley, wheat and corn. With a recent decline in farm separating of milk, it has become less profitable to feed hogs on dairy farms which ship fluid milk. There has also been a decline in farm butchering and curing pork for home use. Hogs are mainly raised on Lopez and Shaw Islands where about 600 head were kept in 1954 on about 50 farms. There were approximately 300 head kept on San Juan Island and 100 head on Orcas Island and its lesser fringing islands.

Table 23.- Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules  
San Juan County, 1939-1954

Year	Hogs (head)	Sheep (head)	Horses and Mules (head)
1939	591	7,395	501
1944	1,810	10,217	292
1949	1,256	11,742	257
1954	1,208	8,620	85

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

### Horses

Horses kept on farms for work and transportation purposes have decreased sharply in the last 20 years. Tractors, trucks and other machines have replaced these animals. In 1920 horses numbered 1,100 head and they were kept as essential livestock on nearly every farm. By 1939 horses were down to 500 head and by 1954 they had decreased to only 85 head kept on 40 farms. Most kept today are of the riding type and some are used in summer camps and riding stables. Decrease of horses made available extra pasture and feed supplies for raising cattle and sheep. In 1954 the Census found only 15 farms in the islands using horses for work power.

### Minor Animal Industries - Goats, Fur Animals, Bees

A few farms have minor animal industries and keep goats, rabbits, fur animals and bees. Minor animal industries returned less than \$1,000 when last measured by the Census in 1950. The keeping of goats was limited to 24 farms in 1954 which had a total of 175 head. Most of these were of the dairy type. Raising of rabbits was practiced on 15 farms in the 1950's and fur farming has been on a minor scale in recent years. The Census of 1949 found only 10 farms owning a total of 86 hives. Honey was produced mainly for farm and local use. Bees were kept to pollinize orchards and clover and alfalfa seed crops.